



FALL 1999

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# Louisiana COASTLINES

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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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## COASTAL MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS

### —Training, Educating, and Working Harder—

Program Manager Greg DuCote heads Interagency Affairs for the state's Coastal Management division (CMD) within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). His staff includes Linda Pace as Coordinator of Local Programs/Nonpoint Source Pollution, and Marilyn Forbes and Jon Truxillo as Coastal Resource Management Specialists. This industrious and capable team is responsible for the development and approval of local coastal programs for parishes within Louisiana's coastal zone.

In 1978, Act 361 authorized the development of local coastal programs (LCP) with approval by federal and state officials. Once approved, a parish then becomes responsible for permitting coastal uses, as well as responsible for determining and assessing mitigation should impacts to coastal wetlands occur as a result of proposed activities. To date, eight parishes, Calcasieu, Cameron, Lafourche, Jefferson, St. Bernard, St. James, Orleans, and St. Tammany have approved and active LCP's.

Plaquemines, Terrebonne, and St. Charles parishes are presently seeking state approval for local programs.

Over time, a number of changes have increased the workload for the state's CMD and the parishes. Coastal zone managers (CZMs) at the local level are now participating in planning and decision-making right along with the state.

Two significant factors reflect the added workload over the years. First, with the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation Plan's goal (effective in 1997) of achieving "no-net loss" of coastal wetlands from developmental activities, came the need to monitor permitted activities and mitigation in the coastal zone as well as areas just outside of the coastal zone, known as the Conservation Plan Boundary.

Second, in 1998, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers' (COE) new Programmatic General Permit (PGP) was adopted, placing permitting and mitigation squarely in the hands of state and local governments. Before the PGP, the COE determined and

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assessed mitigation for local concern permits. Now, LCP administrators are responsible for assessing mitigation associated with local concern permits, in addition to accounting for wetland habitat loss and gains. This accounting system includes identifying habitat types, i.e. fresh, intermediate, brackish and saline marsh, fresh swamp and bottomland hardwood for use in a Wetland Value Assessment (WVA) model to determine the wetland habitat units impacted and the type and amount of mitigation to require for the subsequent loss of wetlands.

Three federal agencies are required to monitor and review CMD's accounting of habitat losses and gains, necessitating frequent reporting meetings among the agencies. Accordingly, CMD has established bi-annual meetings with EPA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and the Corps.

CMD's Interagency Affairs (IA) has also been active in planning and providing for the education, technical assistance, and guidance to coastal zone parish managers so that they grow competent and confident in their expanded roles. In August of 1998, IA held a series of three, one-day workshops designed to educate and instruct the parishes in wetland habitat evaluation, wetland value assessments and mitigation. The workshops were held in Jefferson, Cameron, and St. James parishes. These workshops were led by Mitigation Coordinator Jim Holcombe of the CMD permit/mitigation section, along with CMD field investigators Kirk Kilgen and John Stacy. Field

work was done in the morning to determine habitat type. The afternoon sessions involved classroom work using information obtained in the field, while WVAs were done for each site visited. All workshops were well attended by parish managers and staff.

DuCote and staff planned and hosted in March, *the Local Coastal Programs '99: An Information Exchange Symposium* at the Holiday Inn Holidome in Lafayette. Representatives of the 19 designated Louisiana coastal parishes were invited to meet with members of federal, state and local agencies in an open forum. Goals of the symposium were to share experiences, success stories, and challenges and opportunities for current and future LCPs. Speakers from federal, state and local agencies spoke on issues such as the PGP, mitigation, Coast 2050, new computer technology, and orphaned well sites in the state. IA staff now plan a seminar in the spring of 2000 to continued networking and address other issues.

A fourth mitigation workshop, designed as a review, was held in Plaquemines parish in June 1999. This workshop was led by Tim Killeen with assistance from Frank Cole, CMD field investigators for Plaquemines and Jefferson parishes. Jackie Purrington of the COE's Regulatory Branch provided instruction as did IA's Marilyn Forbes. Forbes introduced a new procedure for reporting information derived from field work and WVAs.

For more about CMD and local programs visit this site on the web:  
[www.dnr.state.la.us/crm/coastmgt/interagencyaff/lcp/local\\_prog.htm](http://www.dnr.state.la.us/crm/coastmgt/interagencyaff/lcp/local_prog.htm)



LCP quarterly meetings held in Baton Rouge have been a source of ongoing information exchange for members of the active LCPs.

Office of Conservation Oilfield Site Restoration Program Manager Gary Ross has provided local coastal managers with orphaned oil field sites in their parishes prioritized for restoration as an outreach measure. Additionally, CZMs have been given an extensive reference library for habitat identification, maps, and other up-to-date materials to help them do their jobs as effectively as possible.

CZMs will also find on the horizon, GIS (geographical information system) information developed by CMD Technical Services Manager

Karl Morgan and staff.

Interagency Affairs was created to oversee both the LCPs and the Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Program for which strategies and plans are underway. According to IA staff, outreach efforts for the nonpoint source pollution program will be very aggressive and will focus on educating the public and our citizens on measures of control.

Many changes have occurred in the years since the first parish was granted approval for a local coastal program. Thanks to a dedicated, supportive and hard-working IA team, the vision of preserving and wisely managing our coastal resources is plainly in sight.

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## Cameron Parish Receives Honors For "Coalition of Coastal Parishes"

Hats off to the Houma-Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce and the Cameron Parish Police Jury. The city-parish organizations were selected among 17 winners of the Walter B. Jones Memorial Award made by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to recognize those who help preserve coastal resources. The winners were recognized on October 21 in Washington, D.C.

According to NOAA officials, Cameron Parish Police Jury received the "Excellence in Local Government Award" for leading Louisiana's coastal parishes in preservation and management of coastal and ocean resources. The Chamber of Commerce was awarded the

"Excellence in Business Leadership" award.

NOAA also cited Cameron Parish for playing a key role in establishing the "Coalition of Coastal Parishes" to help develop and disseminate information about the state's coastal restoration efforts and to give the parishes a forum to discuss and coordinate their work regarding the management of vegetated wetlands, flooding, drainage, sewage, etc.

The parish's local coastal program is seen as a model for balancing the competing uses of the coastal zone for the long-term economic growth and conservation of resources, according to the awards announcement.

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## DNR Wins Achievement Award for GIS

Selected from more than 200,000 organizations worldwide, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources has been honored for its work in geographic information system (GIS) technology. The Special Achievement in GIS award was presented by ESRI, the world leader in GIS software, mapping components, and spatial database management tools. The awards were presented at a ceremony at the 19th Annual ESRI International User Conference, the largest gathering of GIS professionals in the world.

"Each year, the Special Achievement award commemorates a select few organizations using GIS technology. I believe their (DNR) work will be inspirational in leading the world into the next millennium," ESRI President Jack Dangermond said.

A geographic information system is a computer-based tool for mapping and analyzing objects and events. It combines the power of a database with the visualization capabilities offered by maps. Businesses, schools, governments, and organizations use GIS for a variety of applications. GIS provides the power to solve complicated problems, experiment with scenarios, and present ideas. Although geographic analysis and mapping are not new, GIS technology performs these same tasks better and faster than manual methods.

DNR has used GIS to develop the Strategic Online Natural Resources Information System SONRIS/2000. The SONRIS System was designed to increase data accessibility to DNR

clients and the public by using GIS to provide spatial data and important query tools for locating the SONRIS/2000 data. One primary DNR business function is the regulation of oil and gas. The first major oil/gas project utilizes the Louisiana Internet Well Reference to access GIS information on 205,000 wells drilled. Since DNR has established the Louisiana Internet Well Reference to access GIS information on wells drilled in the state, users have had significant benefits. The website can be found at [www.dnr.state.la.us/dnrie2.html](http://www.dnr.state.la.us/dnrie2.html).

GIS applications used for coastal restoration and management include support for wetland habitat change, oyster lease impact assessment, coastal modeling support, wetland value assessments, and public information and education.

For more than thirty years, ESRI users have been making a difference in society by applying GIS in their companies and in government. ESRI honored the 122 Special Achievement in GIS award winners for their contributions to the world.

A number of diverse organizations such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, University of Hong Kong GIS Research Centre, Chevron Petroleum, North Dakota Department of Transportation, European Commission, City of Charlotte - North Carolina, Edward Jones investment brokerage firm, and South Australia Water were also honored by ESRI at the 1999 User Conference in San Diego, California.

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ESRI is the leading developer of geographic information system (GIS) software with more than 220,000 clients worldwide. ESRI also provides consulting, implementation, and technical support services. In addition to its headquarters in California, ESRI has regional offices throughout the United States, international distributors in more than 90 countries, and more than 900

resellers and developers. ESRI's goal is to provide users with comprehensive tools to help them quickly and efficiently manage and use geographic information to make a real difference in the world around them. ESRI can be found on the Web at [www.esri.com](http://www.esri.com).

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## Changes Made to the Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund in 1999

Louisiana legislators passed Acts 11 and 599 making several changes to the Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund and Underwater Obstructions Removal Program during the 1999 Legislative Session.

One important modification established by Act 599 extended the Underwater Obstructions Removal Program to July 1, 2001. It was initially created by Act 666 during the 1997 session to provide identification, inventory and removal of underwater obstructions that are hazardous to navigation in the state's coastal waterways. Under the initial act, the program would have ended July 1, 1999.

The new legislation allows for \$250,000 of the Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund to be deposited into the Underwater Obstructions Removal Fund on July 1, 1999 and July 1, 2000. The law also authorizes the Department of Natural Resources to seek matching funds from available sources. The Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund was established in 1979 to pay for claims suffered by commercial fishermen as a result of hitting or snagging an obstruction or hazard in state-owned waters of the

Louisiana Coastal Zone due to natural or man-made occurrences.

Additionally, Act 599 prohibits payment to be made from the Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund for claims at a site certified by DNR's Commissioner of Conservation to have been cleared. If four or more claims are made after a site has been cleared by the Commissioner, the law requires DNR to revisit the site and locate and remove the obstruction. DNR officials will determine if it is feasible to remove the obstruction.

Other modifications established by Act 11 were passed during the 1999 Legislative Session. Under extenuating circumstances and where good cause is shown, the law now allows DNR's Secretary to waive the 90-day limit on the required report in order to be eligible for payment from the Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund. The law states that the waiver period is not to exceed 45 days after the 90-day reporting period. The legislation furthermore requires the report on the location of the obstruction be made to DNR postmarked within 90 days of the loss.

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